



By PAOLA BETTINELLI

THE HOSPITALITY BUTLER OR 'GENTLEMAN'S GENTLEMAN' COMES TO LIFE IN P.G. WODEHOUSE'S STORIES OF THE BRITISH BUTLER JEEVES AND HIS EMPLOYER BERTIE WOOSTER. Jeeves saves the day! The Butlers in these stories are companions and artists of discretion for their Employers. Today, butlers work in all types of fields around the world and we may find numerous academies in which to learn this fascinating profession.

The art of service



Today's butlers come from all walks of life, but most get started from the same point "the optimal way to enter the butler profession is to enroll at a butler training school where existing (or non-existing skills) can be learnt", said **Newton Cross**, Principal and Owner of The South Africa Butler Academy.

In order to become a top 'go-getter' in this profession, **Mark Johnson**, Business Developer Executive of Magnums Butler, explains "the person will be managed by the senior butler and learn the skills under their guidance and gradually assume additional responsibilities and then move in to the position if their senior manager moves on or retires".

A BUTLER'S ATTRIBUTES

There are no specific personal characteristics or school studies required to become a butler, but "to do this kind of work one must have a love for the profession and for the work one does on a daily basis", advises **Robert Wennekes**, chairman of The International Butler Academy. Even more than in other professions, a butler is required to be servile, flexible, resilient, attentive to detail and an excellent organizer.

Another important characteristic, that has appeared only in the last years due to today's business environment, is that "it is advisable to have English as a second language if it is not the primary language", in fact, "those in this profession are often directly involved with principle international guests who more than likely do converse in English" Mark Johnson states.

BUTLER SCHOOL/ACADEMY

In the 21st century, it is possible to find a butler school or academy more or less in every country. Each school develops different kinds of courses in line with the needs of different markets.

Following a research on different types of butler certification schools, it is evident that many offers are more or less similar.

From the USA, to Europe, South Africa, and Australia, it is possible to find different courses but with all having the same aim.

Mary Louise Starkey, CEO of Starkey International, says "Our primary course is 360 hours and costs 15.000 euros including room and board".

Newton Cross, explains that his main course "is on a full-time basis of eight weeks. The weeks are often spread over six days as some practicals are done on a Saturday...the course is very intensive and includes classroom sessions of theoretical training and also practical exercises in various aspects of the profession".

"The cost for the full course is currently 15.000 euros except the prescribed formal attire and accommodation that are at the student's expense".

The International Butler Academy of Zeist in The Netherlands provides 3 courses per year, 8 weeks per course; the cost is 12.500 euros all inclusive.

Australian Magnums Butler school proposes to their students "a 4 week traditional hands on training program". Moreover, continues Mark Johnson, "Magnums Butlers International developed the first general Distance Learning program...consisting of 10 units of study and it may take a student any where from 4 months to a year to complete depending upon their own personal situation". Magnums also offers "a Distance Learning program consisting of 6 units of study and 2 weeks in Australia for hands on training." The cost of this course is about 1.300 euros. A normal course in the school is from 4.000 to 6.000 euros.

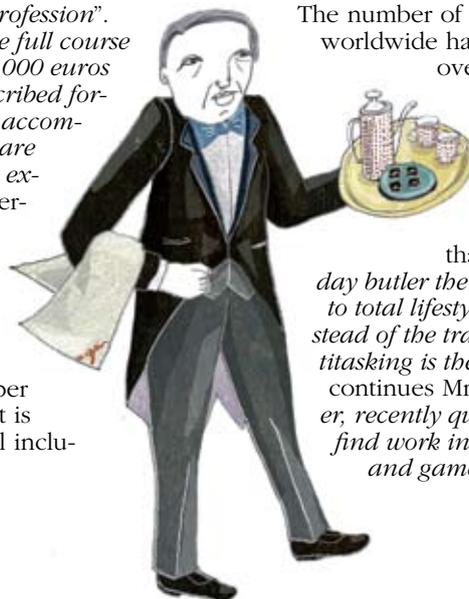
A BUTLER'S CAREER

Mary Louise Starkey defines a butler as "a professional who is trained in the overall management of a private home". There have always been excellent career prospects for one who chooses this profession, and this trend continues to the present.

The number of professional butlers worldwide has increased steadily over the past 25 years.

You can find butlers in multi-million dollar homes in every country in the world. Newton Cross stresses

that "with the modern day butler the emphasis is moving to total lifestyle management, instead of the traditional role... multitasking is the keyword". Usually, continues Mr. Cross, "the younger, recently qualified butlers often find work in hotels, guest houses and game lodges where there





is still an element of supervision and guidance. They are also in huge demand on luxury yachts, cruise liners and trains. The older more experienced is better suited for the domestic household where the responsibilities and pressure can be huge.

Therefore, a butler has many options in his or her career path. Due to today's economy, Johnson specifies that "we are seeing an increase in activity in the field and our inclination is the demand will continue to expand. Luxury resorts are perhaps the most likely to be hiring at present though we are seeing an increase in private estate owners seeking staff for their homes". Regarding the salary, it varies between countries depending on a butler's education background and flexibility. Mr. Cross from South Africa says that "entry level is 750 to 1100 euros per month". For Europe, Mr. Wennekes says that "a butler can earn anywhere from 40.000 to 120.000 euros a year, plus benefits". While in Australia, Mark Johnson states that "an entry level butler, in a private home, can expect to begin around 31.000 euros...with experience and working for an employer with multiple homes, it is not uncommon for a butler to earn in excess of 80.000 euros and much much more". In the USA, Ms. Starkey says that for a Certified Household Manager "salaries are currently between 42.000 and 105.000 euros per year with benefits, plus housing".

A BUTLER'S CLIENTS

Butlers are found in all types of fields, such as working for heads of indus-

try, heads of state, embassies, royalty, successful businessmen and businesswomen. In other words, "the domestic private service is usually required by a range of employers; they can include the rich (old and new money), the famous (celebrities of all ages and walks of life), the pretentious, the lonely, the 'hectic', the rock star, the quiet family with kids, the jetsetter and the rural farmer", as Netwon Cross tells us.

Mark Johnson concludes that "in some parts of the world, it is not unheard of for a butler to have his or her own business and work on a contract basis for a number of private residences. Sometimes a principal may wish to have a butler available but not be in a position to support a full-time staff member. In this instance a 'Butler-on-Demand®' works to the benefit of all concerned".

DRESS CODE

The common viewpoint is that a butler is usually dressed in a specific uniform, composed of 'striped trousers, tailcoat and white gloves', but this uniform "is definitely on the wane". Today, "more modern, casual wear is now expected although a sense of decorum and understated elegance is

still expected. A pair of khaki chinos, golf shirt and boat shoes are quite acceptable". Usually "private resort / spa / villas all have varying dress codes for their butlers" Mr. Cross explains. ●

